A Writing Learning Disability is a common learning problem in school. Teachers may not recognize it as easily as Dyslexia or Attention Deficit Disorder. The standard IQ and achievement test may miss this disorder. If the disability is unrecognized, the child may be labeled lazy, or unmotivated. Because their work is so sloppy they are criticized and their self esteem suffers.

Problems include messy or slow handwriting, poor letter formation, crunched writing, spelling errors, or poor punctuation and grammar.

Some children with messy writing, actually have ADD. They rush through their writing with frequent omissions, poor spelling and inconsistent writing. When asked to write, they fidget, yawn, and don’t pay attention. These children may benefit from the use of medication to help them “focus” on their penmanship.

Writing Learning Disability can cause problems as an adult. So it is important to diagnose and treat these children not only during their school years, but also so they will become a successful adult.

Types

Coordination (Dysgraphism)
Children with Coordination Writing Disorder (the medical term is Dysgraphism) have a problem holding their pencil tightly with their fist, or with their fingers in very unusual positions. They write very slow. Often their handwriting is unreadable. These children often benefit from Occupational Therapy.

Some of these children have coordination problems in other areas such as dressing, eating, running, or throwing a ball. When it involves more than writing, the medical term is Dyspraxia.

Visual-Spatial
Their letters vary in size, shape and spacing. Their writing tends to slope. Hand-eye coordination and copying from the board is a problem. Graph paper for spacing letters, allowing them to print, using their finger to space their words.

Writing Learning Disability
These children have trouble expressing their thoughts on paper. These children are good readers and are great talkers. Using a word processor or a secretary to write down their ideas are helpful strategies.

Sequencing
These children have poor spelling with omissions and deletions. Often they have trouble in Math. Oral reports, using spellers checkers, or a word processor are excellent bypass strategies.
More Bypass Strategies

• Praise your child for trying and for any improvement in their handwriting. Display examples of their writing on the refrigerator.

• Limit the amount they have to write at any one time.

• Check your child’s posture. Use a proper size table and chair. Use sharp pencils. Use pens that are comfortable to hold (try several different types of pens).

• Encourage (but don’t force them) to hold the pencil between the thumb and the first two fingers. Hold the pencil one inch from the tip. Use large pencils or rubber pencil "grippers" (available at office supply stores).

• Use yellow writing pads with blue lines (They are easier to write on). Tape a “letter board” to their desk so they can check on how they should write their letters.

• If your child reverses letters, write down the most frequently misspelled words on a card. You might tape the card on their desk so that they can check their spelling.

• Write the letters on your child’s paper and have them trace them. Trace dot-to-dot letters with arrows so they can practice writing their letters correctly.

• Have them practice “fun writing” like writing to a friend, a famous person, a personal diary, or entering a contest.

• Have your child use their finger for spacing between words.

• Use a typewriter, a word processor program with a spelling and grammar checker.

• Ask their teacher to decrease the amount of written work. Use multiple choice or circle the answer questions. Try not to grade them on their penmanship in other subjects.

• If they have trouble copying from a book or the board, let them Xerox the book or another child’s notes.

• Allow them to use a tape recorder to take notes. Let them give oral reports. Allow them to dictate their reports to a "secretary" (a parent or a friend) who can write down their thoughts for them.

• Put them in the least distractible place in the classroom. Reduce surrounding noise and movement.

• Let them print or write in cursive (longhand) whichever is easier for them.

Other Sources

by S. McCarney, Ed.D.
Hawthorn Press,
800 Gray Oak Dr.
Columbia, MO 65201
(800) 542-1673

LeBonheur Physical & Occupational Therapy
522-3171

Pediatric Therapy, East
3960 Knight Arnold #215
369-6072

The Learning Center
6063 Mt. Moriah Ext.
Memphis, TN
795-2610

Al Graci’s
1217 Getwell Rd
Memphis, TN
324-9251